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COUNTRY Venezuela

SUBJECT Increased Security Measures in
Western Venezuela

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1. There has been a noticeable increase in plant security throughout Western Venezuela during the past three months. The trend first became apparent immediately after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. The responsible oil company officials and the Venezuelan military authorities charged with the formulation of plans to assure adequate security protection in times of strife have exhibited real concern over the possibility of a curtailment, whether insignificant or of disastrous proportions, in the productive capacity of the area. This active concern was even more in evidence after it was announced that the Chinese Government had openly attacked the United Nations in Korea.

Security measures - Oil companies

2. Although still not completely effective, the system of photographic identification badges for all workers of the Creole (Standard of New Jersey) and Mene Grande (Gulf) oil companies has improved greatly during the past three months. The re-issuance of new badges and a company program to screen thoroughly those employees who work in the more vital areas of production have further enhanced the effectiveness of this system. Creole and Mene Grande have made extensive repairs on the heavy wire fence with barbed wire top which surrounds their strategic properties. Of the three major oil companies in this region, the Caribbean (Shell) properties have shown the least degree of advancement in security measures. Despite Caribbean's half-hearted attempt to protect its properties against possible acts of sabotage, there has appeared an increased measure of coordination between Creole and Mene Grande officials on the security problems in the area.

Power Plants

3. The top priority installations, from a security viewpoint, are the several power plants and pumping stations in the area. It is here that the oil companies have made a conscientious effort to install a system of protection which will make it most difficult for anyone desirous of disrupting the effectiveness of the plants. Creole's main power plant at Punta Gorda has been surrounded on all four sides by a nine-foot wire fence. Heretofore, the side fronting on the lake had no protection and was readily accessible from the shallow waters. A system of high-powered lights, which permits the

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assigned guards to view the adjacent lake area to a point several hundred yards off shore, has been installed during the last three months. The marine department has available several night-patrol boats which have made a few runs throughout the oil installations on the lake but have yet to initiate a nightly patrol schedule. Creole has increased the number of guards at the station, and the National Guard has assigned two armed guards to patrol the area. The pumping stations have two sets of wire fences surrounding the properties. The outside gate is manned by a company guard who makes a thorough check of all individuals requesting entry. An added measure of protection for both the power plants and the pumping stations has been suggested by the security division of Creole. It would in effect require telephone clearance from the central security office to the guardhouse at the outside entrance before permitting entrance to anyone other than the regular employees of the stations. The inside wire fence surrounding the pumping stations is manned by another company guard and a National Guardsman equipped with a carbine.

Security measures - Venezuelan National Guard

4. No significant change in the number of troops stationed in the Bolivar district and other oil areas has been noted recently. There has been the usual turn-over in officer command throughout the area. No new weapons or other equipment have been observed since this particular phase of security measures was last reported.*
5. There has been perhaps a slight increase in the number of National Guard plain-clothes agents who report directly to the senior military officer of the district.
6. The Seguridad Nacional has not increased its complement in the area but has shown a tendency to work closer with the National Guard.
7. The personnel and efficiency potential of the local police are extremely low in caliber and no improvement can be expected in the event of any emergency.

Comment. The advances made by the oil companies in plant protection, especially by Creole and Mene Grande during the past three months, although slow in materializing, have been considerable when one takes into account the most inadequate measures which existed three or four months ago. It is widely accepted that it is physically impossible to afford complete protection to the scattered wells and the many miles of pipeline throughout the whole area. But even this danger can be minimized with alert mobile trouble patrols. The greatest danger to oil production, aside from an attack launched by an enemy, is the incapacitating of either a power plant or a pumping station by an individual already employed within these installations. It would take very little imagination on the part of a person bent on neutralizing for a considerable time the electrical equipment, which is the life stream of all the operations in the area.

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